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TOWN AND COUNTRY EMBELLISHMENT

RECENT DECORATIONS OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

BY SAMUEL HOWE

WHEN the French and English War Commission arrived at New York they were received by the City with as handsome decorations as the shortness of time allowed for the purpose made possible. Illustrations of a number of these are given.

It was learned that the executive committee did not know when the visitors would be here and could not find out when they would arrive; they waited for information from the State Department, but were informed they could not receive it more than forty-eight hours before the arrival of the commissioners. The committee, therefore, had to make ready such decorations as were determined upon with the greatest speed, within forty-eight hours, and little time was allowed for preliminary preparations such as the making of flags and festoons. Moreover, the great demand for banners not only here but all over the country, made bunting extremely difficult to obtain. When we take all this into consideration, the work of the artists engaged is worthy of all praise.

The original committee of which the architect Cass Gilbert was chairman, consisted in addition of Charles Steckler, Charles Elliott Warren, Edwin H. Blashfield, Rodman Wanamaker and George F. Kunz; this committee was later enlarged.

Mayor Mitchel seemed to expect of Mr. Gilbert to take certain amount of initiative and responsibility that went with his chairmanship. He did so. And he asked the committee to take the view that the festival was not an occasion of rejoicing, not the celebration of a victory—far from it—it was to be a serious and dignified welcome to the representative of our allies engaged in a terribly serious enterprise. It was therefore hoped that the public decorations should express this point of view, in short that it should be as when a host sets his house in order to receive distinguished guests in a dignified manner:—he places flowers upon his table and sees to it that the adornments of his house are suit-

able to the occasion. Mr. Gilbert suggested that they should adopt some quiet and serious color as a general background, or rather a common note, to run through the whole scheme of decoration and that the color should be navy blue, one that is found approximately in the flags of all our allies, one against which the more brilliant decorations would show conspicuously. The committee accepted this point of view.

Mr. Blashfield rendered distinguished services in the preparation of an escutcheon representing the ideal heads of France and England which was used in most if not all of the decorations. The original, we believe, is now in the possession of the Mayor. The badge used by all of the committees was under the charge of the Committee on Decorations. It was a blue ribbon and selected as being in conformity with the general basic note of navy blue, the badge itself being under the care of Sherry H. Fry and George F. Kunz of Tiffany & Company, as a subcommittee.

Unfortunately, a good deal of the time, there was such a high wind that it was impossible to display some of the most splendid features of the decorations, such as the great blue banners at Columbia University, huge banners that were made



FIG. 1—GRANT'S TOMB
THE HIGH WIND MADE IMPOSSIBLE THE CARRYING OUT OF
THE FULL SCHEME OF DECORATION

for the approach to Grant's Tomb, and the beautiful screen of background with panels for the statue of Joan of Arc on Riverside Drive. Various points in the city were handled by different men. The point opposite the Public Library was under the charge of Thomas Hastings and Frank P. Fairbanks; Madison Square, William Mitchell Kendall; Union Square, Howard Greenley; Washington Square, Horace Moran; Lafayette statue, Brooklyn, Lloyd Warren; Manhattan Bridge, Henry Hornbostel; Columbia University, William A. Boring. These, according to Cass Gilbert, chairman, did effective and admirable work. The committees dealt with seventeen principal places throughout the city; in addition to that: the decoration of Fifth Avenue and the interior of



FIG. 2—DECORATIONS IN PLAZA SQUARE
FIFTH AVENUE AND 59TH STREET



FIG. 3—DECORATIONS IN FRONT OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY
FIFTH AVENUE AND 42ND STREET



FIG. 4—AT MADISON SQUARE, FIFTH AVENUE AND 23RD STREET
SHOWING THE CIRCULAR ESCUTCHEON DESIGNED BY BLASHFIELD

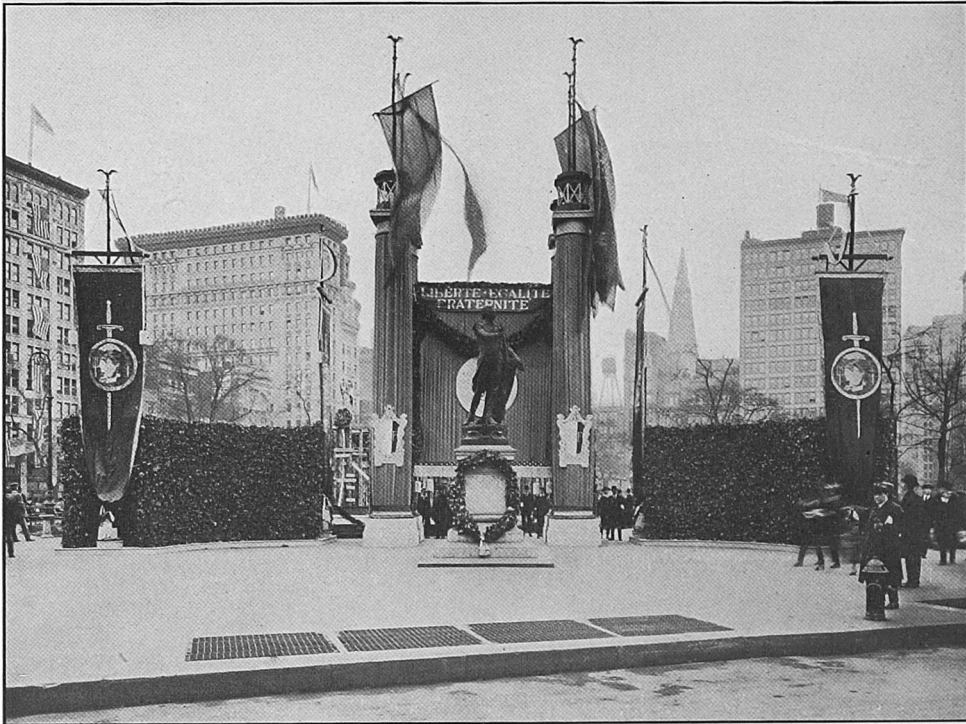


FIG. 5—AT UNION SQUARE, BROADWAY AND 14TH STREET
SHOWING LAFAYETTE STATUE

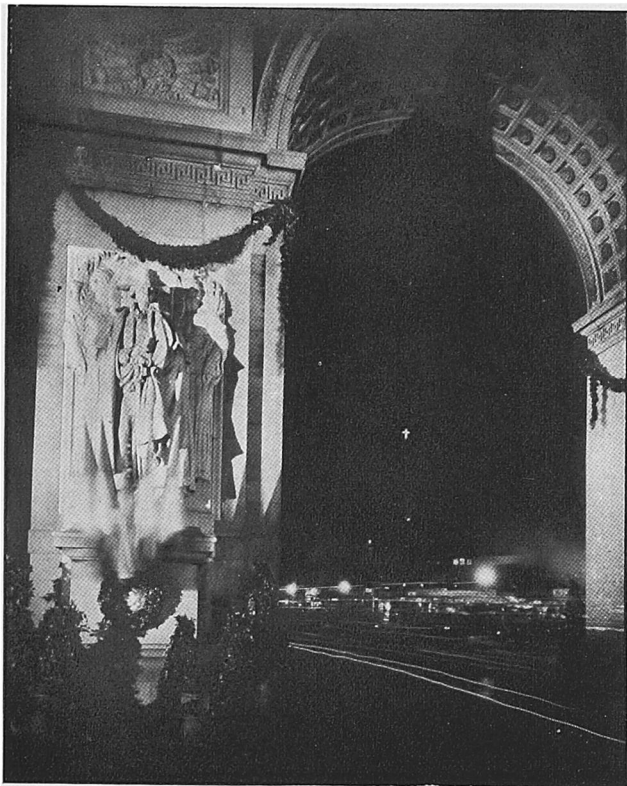


FIG. 8—NIGHT EFFECT SEEN THROUGH WASHINGTON ARCH
IN DISTANCE THE ILLUMINATED CROSS OF THE
JUDSON MEMORIAL CHURCH

City Hall, the latter being under the charge of Grosvenor Atterbury.

The banquet held at the Waldorf-Astoria was in the hands of Mr. Gilbert personally. In regard to this latter problem it is learned that the entire supply of navy blue had been exhausted; so the decorators had to use a beautiful light blue, such as one sees now in the new French uniforms. No good photograph was taken of these decorations, so a rough sketch is added in order to help out the following description of the decorations. These consisted: of a great simple background of blue drapery hanging in vertical folds for the entire height of the room back of the banquet table. Across the top, forming a frieze, ran a line of thirteen great laurel wreaths and festoons representing the thirteen original States and also reflecting the idea of the *thirteen allies* that are now engaged on our side of the war. These festoons and laurel wreaths were tied with bright silk ribbons of a golden color. At each end were placed tall cedar trees. Back of the table and for a height of about six feet was a continuous green hedge of laurel. In the center, and about eight feet from the floor, was placed a golden panel surrounded by laurel upon which were the words: "To make the world safe for democracy." Above that was the Blashfield escutcheon containing the ideal heads of France and England and, grouped above that, the flags of the thirteen allies intertwining with the American flag. At each end of the table was placed a fluttering silk American flag—blown out by the usual fan device so as to keep it in motion.

A separate sub-committee of decorations was appointed to cover each locality. There were seventeen local centres in addition to the general decoration up and down Fifth Avenue. The following sub-com-

mittees were appointed: on properties, so that there could be an exchange of materials as might be needed—this was ably handled by James Monroe Hewlett; a sub-committee on badge as above described; a sub-committee on commemorative medal; a sub-committee on estimates, audits and permits, so that all dealings with the city government and its various departments should go through one committee; a sub-committee on finance, legal rights, etc. These were all dealt with within the committee, since the general committee included a banker, a lawyer and a broker as well as artists. A special secretary and clerk were employed in addition to the official secretary, and meetings were held daily.

It was learned that admirable work was done by the graduates of the American Academy in Rome, many of whom were members of the committees specially chosen, because it was rightly supposed that they would bring to it a sort of training that would be needed in matters of this kind. Subjoined is a list of the Committee on Decorations and the Sub-Committees as follows:

COMMITTEE ON DECORATIONS

Cass Gilbert, Architect, Chairman.

Herbert Adams	Sculptor
Robert Aitken	Sculptor
Chester Aldrich	Architect
A. A. Anderson	Painter
Grosvenor Atterbury	Architect
Henry Bacon	Architect
Edwin H. Blashfield.....	Painter
William A. Boring	Architect
Robert Grier Cook	Banker
H. P. Erskine.....	Architect
Frank P. Fairbanks	Painter
Barry Faulkner	Mural Painter
J. H. Freedlander	Architect
Daniel C. French	Sculptor
Sherry H. Fry	Sculptor
Julian E. Garnsey	Painter
Howard Greenley	Architect
John Gregory	Sculptor
Herbert Groesbeck, Jr.	Architect
Thomas Hastings	Architect
J. Monroe Hewlett	Architect
Henry F. Hornbostel	Architect
Francis C. Jones	Painter
Wm. Mitchell Kendall.....	Architect
Dr. Geo. F. Kunz.....	Lapidary
Horace Moran	Architect
Ernest Peixotto	Painter
Charles A. Platt.....	Landscape Architect
Edward Robinson.....	Curator Metropolitan Museum
Eugene F. Savage	Painter
Charles Steckler	Architect
Theron R. Strong	Lawyer
Rodman Wanamaker	Banker
Charles Elliott Warren.....	Architect
Lloyd Warren	Architect
Ezra Winter	Painter
Ernest Lewis	Painter

SUB-COMMITTEES

Battery.....	J. H. Freedlander
City Hall	Grosvenor Atterbury
Columbia University.....	Wm. A. Boring
Columbia Circle.....	John Gregory
Grant's Tomb.....	Francis C. Jones



FIG. 6—IN BROOKLYN
DECORATIONS AROUND THE STATUE OF WASHINGTON



FIG. 7—NIGHT EFFECT—THE PUBLIC LIBRARY
FIFTH AVENUE AND 42ND STREET

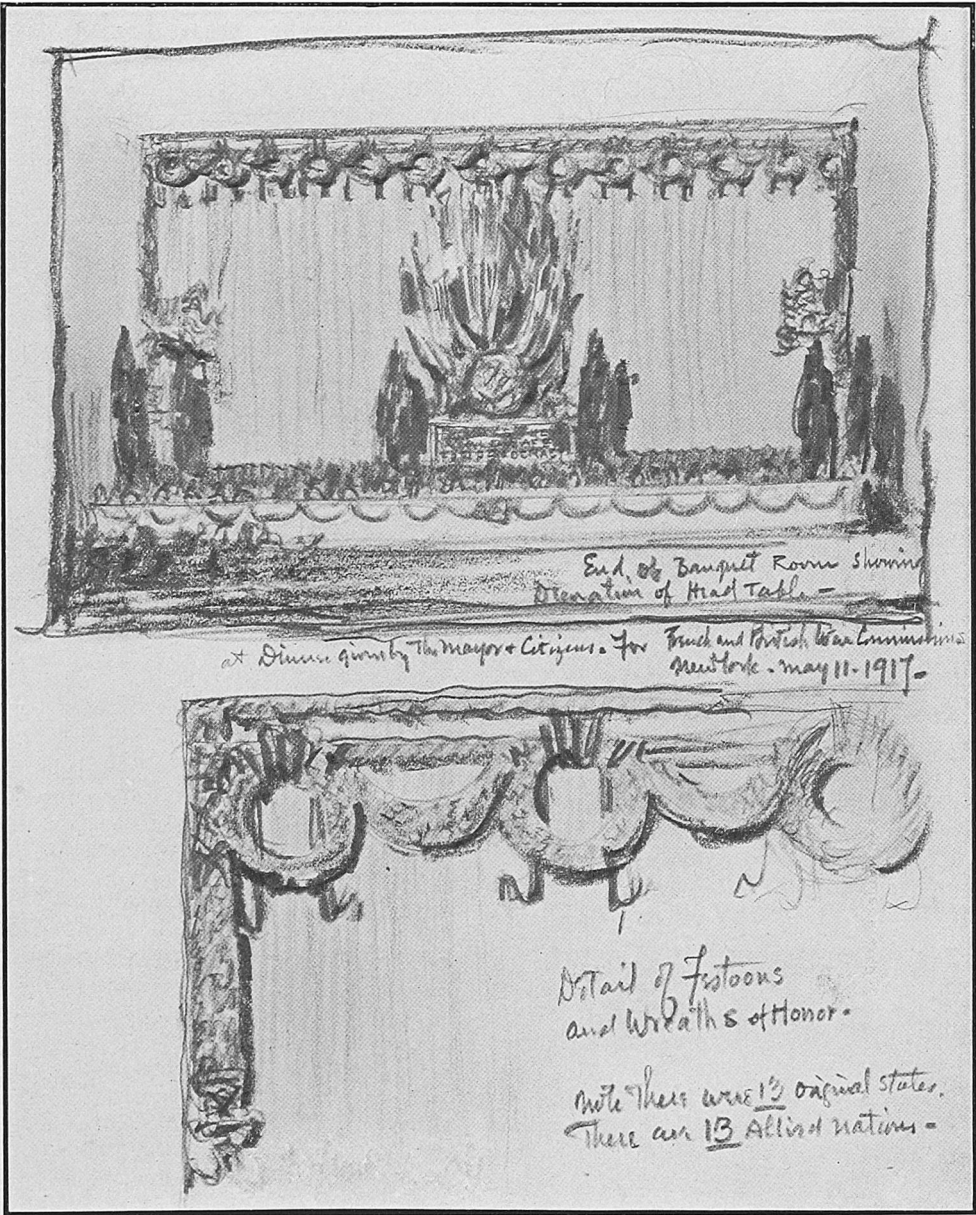


FIG. 9—DECORATION BACK OF BANQUET TABLE, WALDORF-ASTORIA

Joan of Arc Statue.....	Eugene F. Savage
LaFayette Statue, Brooklyn.....	Henry Bacon
Madison Square.....	Wm. Mitchell Kendall
Manhattan Bridge.....	Henry Hornbostel
Plaza	Ezra Winter
Public Library.....	Thomas Hastings
Union Square.....	Howard Greenley
Washington Square	Horace Moran
Williamsburg Bridge Plaza.....	Lloyd Warren
Committee on Properties.....	J. Monroe Hewlett
Committee on Audits and Permits.....	Charles Steckler
Committee on Illuminations.....	Henry S. Thompson

The public little knows what energy and time-consuming labor such public work as this entails on the part of men who are eminent in their profession and all of whom are busy. And when the public reflects that they all served without pay, and many put their hands in their own pockets, in order that the reputation of the city for hospitality backed up by taste should not suffer, are we not justified in saying that the city owes all these men a debt of gratitude?

Samuel Howe

